

TORPOINT
URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Medical Officer of Health's
ANNUAL REPORT.

1908.

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TO THE

Torpoint Urban District Council.

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to submit my Fifth Annual Report of your district.

Torpoint was created an Urban District in 1904, having previously been part of the St. Germans Rural District. The area of the District is 1324 acres. The inhabitants are almost entirely employed in the Navy and Devonport Dockyard. The population at the last census was 3404; the number of inhabited houses 549; the average number of persons per house 6·2. At the present time the population is estimated at 4524; and the number of inhabited houses is 754; an increase of 1120 in the population and 205 in the number of inhabited houses, since the last census. The number of persons per house is taken at 6, instead of at 6·2 as at the last census, owing to the fact that the proportion of new houses inhabited by one family only is greater than that of the old houses.

The principal reason for the formation of the Urban District was the neglected condition of the roads and back lanes, with the exception of the County road and one or two other main roads. It is a matter of great regret that with the exception of the construction of York Road by the Antony and Carbeal estates, and the repair of the footpaths in Macey Street by the Council, nothing has been done to put the roads and back lanes in proper repair. One part of the district, that on the Carbeal estate, cannot be approached in bad weather without great discomfort. Barossa road is actually dangerous. Many of the back lanes, notably that behind Beatrice Terrace, are frequently impassable.

This condition entails loss to the owners of the houses, discomfort to the general public, and loss to the ratepayers from voids. For the sake of all concerned I hope that the Council will forthwith take the matter seriously in hand.

HOUSE ACCOMMODATION.

The house accommodation is sufficient for the present needs of the district; the rents are very much lower than they are in the Three Towns, for similar accommodation; many persons managing to rent a house in Torpoint who found it necessary to share one in the Three Towns.

The house to house inspection of the older parts of the town was carefully carried out by Mr. JONES, the late Sanitary Inspector, and there is little to complain of in their present condition; three common courts, which had been allowed to pass for the time under protest, have since been taken in hand by Mr. BEAUMONT the Surveyor and Sanitary Inspector.

MILK SUPPLY.

The Dairies, Cowsheds and Milk-shops have been inspected: they are all in good condition, and the Milk Supply of the district good.

The taking of samples, both of this and other food supplies, is undertaken by the police.

BAKEHOUSES.

The Bakehouses, the number of which was 4 last year, is now 3; the one which has been given up being the only one to which repeated visits were necessary. Those working now are well-arranged and good, every care being taken.

SLAUGHTER HOUSES.

The number of Slaughter Houses in the district is 3: all of them are well-kept, and well ventilated, and suitable for the purpose. In the country part of the district are two sheds, specially built for pig styes, and capable of housing 150—200 pigs. At one end of the sheds it has been the habit of the owners to slaughter pigs, and, in one case, other animals intended for human food. As pig styes, they are excellent, and comply with all the Board of Agriculture's regulations, but they should not be registered as Slaughter Houses; and should they be used for slaughtering purposes, the owners should be warned, as they practically would be slaughtering in a pig sty. If it is thought desirable that animals should be slaughtered on the spot, proper slaughter houses should be built.

MIDWIVES' ACT.

As Inspector under the Midwives' Act, I have to report that in place of the two unsatisfactory midwives previously at work in this district—one of whom has removed and since been reprimanded by a Coroner, and the other been removed from the register—we have one Trained Midwife, supplied by the District Nursing Association. She is zealous in her work, and has proved a great blessing and comfort to those whom she has attended. In 1908 she attended 44 patients as midwife, and 18 as nurse with a doctor; to these she paid 1422 visits. The fees charged are little in excess of those charged by her unskilled predecessors.

WATER.

A Local Government Board enquiry was held on July 10th by A. W. BRIGHTMORE, ESQ., D. Sc., M. Ins. C.E., to enquire into a request from the Urban District Council for sanction to borrow £700 for Works of Water Supply. It was proposed to spend the £700 in augmenting the supply by taking the surplus of the water lately supplied to Antony House from Tregantle.

The greatest gauging, up to December 11th, was 80,000 gallons per day; but, by the time of the enquiry, this gauging had fallen 8,000. The requirements of Antony House being 6,000, this left a surplus of only 2,000; it was proposed to compensate for this variation by a reservoir. Both Chemical and Bacteriological Analysis gave excellent results. The Local Government Board refused their sanction on account of the inadequacy of the proposed increase, and furthermore taking into consideration the Chemical and Bacteriological Analyses of the springs contributing to the existing water supply of the district, required the Council to find a supply which was both adequate and of undoubted purity.

The need of a better supply for the higher levels of the town is recognised by the Council. At present, in some cases, it takes four minutes to fill an ordinary bucket from a tap near the ground; the flush tanks take longer still.

Fortunately there is an unlimited supply available, at a distance, of water of the greatest purity, and I strongly urge the Council to obtain it, and thus make a final settlement of the water question. Many of the inhabitants of the higher portion of the town are remaining on, quarter by quarter, trusting to the Council to do all in its power to remedy their want of water.

Two Chambers have been built at Craffhole by the St. Germans Rural District Council for the purpose of intercepting the drainage of Craffhole and preventing the contamination of the reservoir; as a temporary measure this is, no doubt, useful; its permanent efficiency is doubtful.

SCHOOLS.

THE WESLEYAN SCHOOLS. The extension of the sanitary accommodation of these schools has been taken into consideration in the enlargement of the chapel and neighbouring buildings, four W.C.'s. and a new urinal having been added.

THE NATIONAL SCHOOLS. Nothing has been done during the year to remove their insanitary condition to which I have referred in my previous reports.

In consequence of the refusal of the Managers to carry out the necessary work, the Council had, much to their regret, to issue a summons against the owner of the schools, who derives no benefit from the ownership; the summons was dismissed owing to doubt as to the condition of the Council's Sewer. The Council have ordered the Sewer to be re-laid, but this will make no difference to the defects existing in the school yard, which are due to two gulleys which are alternately flooded and

syphoned by the action of the school flush tanks, to an obsolete D Trap, and to want of proper interception and ventilation.

The schools are shortly to be replaced by County Schools, but as, presumably, the existing buildings will still be used as Sunday Schools and for other parochial purposes, their sanitary condition will still need amendment.

THE REMOVAL AND DISPOSAL OF HOUSE REFUSE.

This is carried out by Public Scavenger twice a week: his work is made unnecessarily heavy by the size and awkwardness of many of the receptacles used. I recommend that where the receptacle is not suitable, the Public Scavenger should be empowered to refuse to empty it, and to report the case to the Sanitary Inspector.

The deposit of the Town Refuse at the top of Pengelly Hill entails an infringement of the Council's By-Laws, and gives rise to a much complained of nuisance to the neighbouring village of Wilcove and to those using the main road. I recommend that when the contract has to be re-considered, some other spot, not subject to these objections, be insisted upon.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

The district has been remarkably free from Infectious Diseases during the year; only 5 cases were notified—2 of Erysipelas and 3 of Typhoid. The 3 cases of Typhoid occurred in March, October and November respectively. The cases in March and October were both of children of 8 years of age, and in both cases found to be due to defective drainage of their homes. The one in November, that of a man of 22, was due to eating shell-fish—mussels and “queens”—purchased out of the district.

From the Non-notifiable Infectious Diseases there were 10 deaths: 4 from Whooping Cough, and 3 each from Diarrhoea and Influenza. The total Zymotic deaths were 10. The Zymotic Death Rate was 1·8 per 1000 of population, as compared with 1·1 for 1907, and 1·29 for England and Wales in 1908, Whooping Cough accounting for the slight increase.

I am glad that the Council are going to consider my advice to adopt the Public Health Acts Amendment Act, of 1907; they will thus be empowered, in certain cases, to compensate those households suffering from infectious disease for restrictions placed upon them for the public safety.

TUBERCULOSIS.

It had been my custom to recommend disinfection of the premises occupied by a tuberculous patient. The recommendations have always been accepted on careful explanation. The memorandum on Administrative Measures against Tuberculosis issued by the Local Government Board, and also the Compulsory Notification of Tuberculosis by the Poor Law Medical Officer, will greatly strengthen my hands in dealing with these cases. The number of cases of poor persons suffering from this disease, which have been notified to me, is 3.

VITAL STATISTICS.

THE BIRTH RATE. The total number of Births was 128, of which 65 were male and 63 female. The numbers for the previous four years were 163, 135, 136, and 124 respectively. Taking into account the growth of the town, if the Birth Rate of 1904 had been maintained there would have been born in the last four years 154 more children. The seriousness to the nation of the falling National Birth Rate is now beginning to be realised and is closely connected with the moral and physical well-being of the nation.

The Birth Rate was 28·3; that for England and Wales was 26·5.

The number of Deaths of children under 1 year of age was 16, of which 2 were under 1 month of age. The causes of death in the 16 cases were as follows:—Marasmus and enteritis, 3 each; whooping cough and pneumonia, 2 each; syphilis, meningitis, convulsions, and suffocation from overlaying, 1 each. This gives a Death Rate of 125 per 1000 births, as compared with 112·9 for 1907, and 121 for England and Wales in 1908.

THE DEATH RATE. The number of deaths occurring in the district was 76; 10 of these were of “non-residents” in the Workhouse Infirmary, leaving a nett total of 66: 30 of the 76 deaths were of persons of 65 years and upwards. This gives a Death Rate of 14·6, compared with 14·7 for England and Wales.

In conclusion, I beg to thank the Council, and especially the Sanitary Committee, for their support in my work during the past year.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your Obedient Servant,

SYDNEY G. VINTER,

Medical Officer of Health.

